

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01 SAJ-01

SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00 /061 W

----- 015468

O R 271935Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6913

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

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DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS SECRETARY'S PARTY

PARISFOR ASST SECRETARY HARTMAN

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: ELECTION RESULTS: PERCEPTIONS AND REACTIONS

REF: LISBON 2744 (DTG 271735Z APR 76)

SUMMARY: THE REACTIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF POLITICAL OBSERVERS TO THE ELECTION RESULTS HAVE CREATED A MOOD IN WHICH THE PS IS SEEN AS HAVING ACHIEVED A SUBSTANTIAL SUCCESS, THE PPD AS DECLINING MORE THAN ITS SHARE OF THE VOTE WOULD INDICATE, AND THE PCP AS HAVING DONE LESS WELL THAN ITS INCREASE APPEARS TO JUSTIFY. IT IS AGAINST THIS MOOD THAT THE INTRICATE POLITICAL

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MANEUVERS OF THE DIFFICULT INTERREGNUM HAVE BEGUN.

THE MILITARY, AS THE ULTIMATE POLITICAL ARBITERS, ARE REASON-
ABLY SATISFIED WITH THE RESULTS; HOWEVER, THEY CANNOT FAIL
TO BE DISTURBED BY THE LACK OF A CLEAR MANDATE. END SUMMARY.

1. PORTUGAL'S PARTIES AND POLITICAL FIGURES HAVE HAD TIME
TO DIGEST THE ELECTION RESULTS. THEIR PERCEPTIONS AND
REACTIONS, FLOWING FROM CONVERSATIONS WITH US, FOLLOW:

2. SOCIALISTS: ALTHOUGH THE SOCIALISTS HAD PUBLICLY PRE-
DICTED A PERCENTAGE OVER 40, NEITHER THEY NOR ANYONE
ELSE EXPECTED THEM TO GET IT. THUS THEIR REACTION TO THE 35
THEY GOT IS ONE OF SATISFACTION. THEY ARE HAPPY, IF NOT
JUBILANT, WITH MORE THAN A THIRD OF THE ELECTORATE. THEY HAVE
BEEN ENCOURAGED THAT THE PS SUCCESS OF LAST YEAR DID NOT
STEM FROM TACTICAL VOTES FROM THE RIGHT.
THEY ARE PLEASED TO HAVE AGAIN DEMONSTRATED STRENGTH THROUGHOUT
THE COUNTRY, WITH EITHER A FIRST OR SECOND PLACE IN ALL DISTRICTS;
EXCEPT BRAGANCA, GUARDA, AND VISEU, IN THE NORTH; AND HORTA
IN THE AZORES. MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, THE SOCIALISTS ARE
SATISFIED AT HAVING BEEN ABLE TO WITHSTAND THE COUNTRY'S DRIFT
TO THE RIGHT. IN PARTICULAR, THEY ARE PLEASED THAT THE PPD
AND THE CDS TOGETHER DID NOT ACHIEVE 50 PERCENT AND THAT THE
PCP WAS UNABLE TO REACH THE 1975 COMBINED TOTAL OF THE COM-
MUNISTS AND THE FELLOW-TRAVELING MDP. ALL MAJOR PARTIES NOW
ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE SOCIALISTS ARE INDISPENSABLE TO ANY
GOVERNMENT IN PORTUGAL.

3. PPD: PARTY LEADERS AND RANK AND FILE ARE GLOOMY AND
DISILLUSIONED. THE PARTY HAD REASONABLY EXPECTED TO HOLD
WHAT IT HAD LAST YEAR, AND SERIOUSLY THOUGHT IT WOULD
INCREASE ITS PERCENTAGE SOMEWHAT. HALF HEARTEDLY, THEY
NOW MAKE THE CASE THAT THEY LOST LESS THAN THE PS. AS SA
CARNEIRO SAID, THE RESULT WAS "NOT WHAT WE WORKED AND HOPED
FOR." SA CARNEIRO, HIMSELF, IS WIDELY BLAMED FOR THE PARTY'S
FAILURE. ON THE OTHER HAND, KNOWLEDGEABLE OBSERVERS POINT OUT
THAT, ALTHOUGH THE PARTY IS DISAPPOINTED, IT DID QUITE WELL
IN GETTING A QUARTER OF THE ELECTORATE DESPITE ITS LACK
OF AN IDEOLOGICAL HOME GROUND.

4. CDS: THE CDS IS SEEN AS A BIG WINNER IN THE ELECTIONS.
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ALTHOUGH IT HOPED TO TRIPLE ITS 1975 VOTE, ITS ACHIEVEMENT
IN DOUBLING IT PLEASED THE PARTY AND IMPRESSED OBSERVERS.
THE CDS ACHIEVED THE MAIN OBJECTIVE IT HAD SET AFTER
THE 1975 ELECTION -- TO SUPPLANT THE COMMUNISTS AS PORTUGAL'S
THIRD PARTY. THE CDS IS NOW PERCEIVED AS A RESPECTABLE
POLITICAL FORCE, RATHER THAN A GROUP OF RIGHT-WING POLITICAL
OUTCASTS.

5. PCP: THE PCP DID BETTER THAN BOTH WE AND MANY OTHER OBSERVERS HAD EXPECTED BY MOVING FROM 12.5 TO 14.6 PERCENT. NEVERTHELESS, IT HAS BEEN WIDELY NOTED THAT THE PCP FAILED TO CRACK THE IMPORTANT 15 PERCENT BARRIER, DID NOT ACHIEVE THE 18 TO 20 PERCENT THE PARTY EXPECTED, AND WAS NOT ABLE TO PICK UP THE FULL FOUR PERCENT OF THE FELLOW-TRAVELING MDP. AND, OF COURSE IT FELL BEHIND THE CONSERVATIVE CDS INTO FOURTH PLACE. AS A RESULT, THE PCP RANK AND FILE AND LEADERSHIP HAVE TAKEN A SOMEWHAT SOUR VIEW OF THE ELECTION OUTCOME. CUNHAL, FOR EXAMPLE, REFUSED TO APPEAR FOR A ROUND TABLE WITH THE OTHER PARTY LEADERS THE DAY AFTER THE ELECTIONS. THE PCP-LINE "DIARIO" HAS BEEN RESTRAINED IN ITS COVERAGE AND DID NOT CLAIM A PCP VICTORY.

6. THE FAR RIGHT: THE TWO PARTIES PERCEIVED BY THE ELECTORATE AS FAR RIGHT -- PDC AND PPM -- DID BADLY AND ARE NOW SEEN AS INCONSEQUENTIAL. THE PDC, WHICH HAD SOME HOPE OF CUTTING INTO THE CDS VOTE, WAS SO DISAPPOINTED IN THE RESULTS THAT IT IS NOW CRYING FRAUD. THE PPM DROPPED FROM LAST YEAR.

7. ULTRA LEFT: THE ULTRA LEFT, WHICH RAN A VIGOROUS AND NOISY CAMPAIGN, SUCCEEDED IN INCREASING ITS TOTAL VOTE BY A HALF PERCENT, BUT STILL COULD ELECT ONLY ONE DEPUTY. THE UDP, WITH THAT DEPUTY, WAS UNABLE TO IMPROVE ON LAST YEAR'S VOTE. THE MAOIST MRPP, BECAUSE OF ITS ACTIVIST IMAGE, WIDESPREAD POSTER CAMPAIGN, AND SOME SUCCESSES IN UNION ELECTIONS, WAS GENERALLY BELIEVED TO BE A STRONGER PARTY THAN ITS 0.7 PERCENTAGE ULTIMATELY REVEALED. THE MAOISTS, WITH THEIR INCESSANT ATTACKS ON THE PCP, WERE UNABLE TO PICK OFF PCP VOTES, BUT ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE HAD SOME EFFECT IN REDUCING PCP SUPPORT.

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6. COMMENT: THIS MOOD, IN WHICH THE PREEMINENT ROLE OF THE SOCIALISTS IS GENERALLY ACKNOWLEDGED, EXPLAINS WHY SOARES IS THE FOCUS OF ATTENTION, WHY SA CARNEIRO IS ON THE DEFENSIVE, AND WHY CUNHAL IS UNUSUALLY QUIET (REFTEL). IT IS AGAINST THIS MOOD THAT THE INTRICATE MANEUVERING OF THE DIFFICULT INTERREGNUM PERIOD BEGINS. THE MILITARY, AS THE ULTIMATE POLITICAL ARBITERS, ARE REASONABLY SATISFIED WITH THE RESULTS; HOWEVER, THEY CANNOT FAIL TO BE DISTURBED BY THE LACK OF A CLEAR MANDATE.

CARLUCCI

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED SECRETARY'S PARTY.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERSONAL OPINION, ELECTION RESULTS, POLITICAL LEADERS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: saccheem
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976LISBON02747
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760159-1141
From: LISBON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760419/aaaaapjc.tel
Line Count: 166
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 LISBON 2744
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: saccheem
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 FEB 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 FEB 2004 by morefirh>; APPROVED <17 AUG 2004 by saccheem>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ELECTION RESULTS: PERCEPTIONS AND REACTIONS
TAGS: PINT, PO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006